

Commissioner's Decision and Order  
The Hope High School Complex:  
*Progress Report #1*

Presented to Commissioner Peter McWalters  
by  
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## ***INTRODUCTION and OVERVIEW***

*“The goal... is to create a unique and fulfilling educational experience for every student who enters Hope High School.” Commissioner’s Decision and Order, p 25.*

### **Task Charge**

Last winter Rhode Island State Commissioner of Education Peter McWalters delivered a Decision and Order regarding ongoing efforts to improve conditions for learning and student outcomes at the Hope High School Complex in Providence. The Decision and Order included the designation of a Special Master whose charge is to oversee and facilitate implementation of the specifics of the Order and its overall intent. Included in the charge is the delivery of reports from the Special Master to the Commissioner reviewing progress at the Hope. This is the first of those reports.

The purpose of this report is to provide a public vehicle for tracking progress toward the goals and objectives of the Commissioner’s Decision and Order. To accomplish this, it will highlight positive developments, identify areas that need some additional attention and, if there are any it will also identify areas of critical concern. The report also introduces an organizing framework through which to monitor ongoing implementation of the Order and an update on the recent, near term activities related to the Order.

The report is presented in four sections. The first, *Introduction and Overview*, provides background and orientation about the Order and the report format. The next section, *Part I – Commissioner’s Decision and Order – Student Success at Hope*, describes successful implementation of the Order in student terms. *Part II – Commissioner’s Decision and Order – Areas of Compliance*, focuses on the prescriptions of the Order and progress toward their implementation. The last section of the report – *What’s Next?* - provides concluding observations, focuses on district capacity to support success and provides recommendations for next steps.

In reviewing each area of compliance within the Order a vision of success against which to compare progress is presented first. This is followed by a narrative review of progress within each sub-area.

Included these reviews are references to SALT survey data collected by the Rhode Island Department of Education during school year 2003-2004 and reported in *Infoworks* in 2005. This data should be considered as baseline information, not measures of the impact of any activities carried out this spring.

Finally, lists of areas of strong performance, recommendations for improvement, and areas of critical concern are provided.

## **Current Context**

By any account, the situation at Hope is extraordinary. Multiple, past efforts to “improve” the school, intense public scrutiny, high dropout, low performance, changes in leadership and the turnover of nearly one half of the teaching staff all contribute to a challenging context. Despite these challenges, a sense of purpose and determination remain intact among members of the Hope community.

This spring saw the arrival of three newly appointed administrators at the school. They immediately began the long, hard work of getting to know the school its staff and students, attending to various administrative details, and managing wrenching personal transitions as they left schools at which they had been respected and successful.

Through their collective efforts – supported by Providence School District central office staff in its partnership with the Providence Teachers Union – momentum is growing toward a significant and positive “reopening” this fall.

## **Factors And Process For Determining Progress Made**

In determining the sufficiency of implementation of the elements of the Order for the purposes of this report a number of factors have been taken into account.

First, the primary bases for determination of progress are the specific expectations articulated in the Order, related and available indicators, and observable evidence of achievement to high standards of implementation. In other words, what does the Order say needs to occur, are those issues being attended to, are they being attended to well , what is the relevant evidence that supports the findings of progress?

Second, are there significant mitigating circumstances that might legitimately impact the pace or depth of implementation?

Lastly, are there elements of the Order that, upon reflection some months after its writing, deserve reconsideration or amendment? Put another way, does everything in the Order still make sense to do the way it is described in the Order? What changes, if any, need to be considered?

So, while the Order and its specific prescriptions are the most significant basis for determining the levels of progress achieved there are also other factors taken into consideration. In the end, the determination of progress, while informed by data and supported by evidence is based significantly on the professional judgment of the Special Master as authorized in the Order itself.

While further data and many related baselines remain to be determined this summer and in the early fall, there is sufficient data to make an initial, qualified determination of progress in each of the four areas of compliance.

## **Determination Of Progress**

*It is the judgment of the Special Master that progress toward implementation of the Order is satisfactory and there are no areas of critical concern.*

As with any complicated improvement effort, of course, some things have gone more smoothly than others and some areas have seen better progress than others. These areas are differentiated and identified within this report.

It is important to acknowledge the good work that has occurred and to place that progress within the context of the challenge as a whole. Sufficient and good progress is being made and thus, a good beginning has occurred. However, there should be no mistaking that this is only the beginning. There is a long road ahead. Initial progress in instituting structural, programmatic and personnel changes are essential steps toward success. However the ultimate success of this process depends on numerous successful steps in the process – each with significant challenges.

In addition to the variety of tasks demanded by the Order, the vast distance between current performance levels and the ultimate goals of the Order combine to make the remaining work substantively greater than what has been accomplished in these first few months.

Despite this sobering reminder about the breadth and depth of the work that lies ahead, progress has been made and momentum is growing. Overall, indications are that progress will continue and expectations should remain high for Hope and the eventual improvements that will be evidenced there. There is great hope for Hope.

## ***Part I - The Commissioner's Decision And Order: Student Success At Hope***

The Decision and Order describes many activities, and attending to the successful implementation of those activities is essential, but the bottom line must remain – are students succeeding? The Commissioner's Order identifies these longer-term student success measures as the ultimate purpose of the Order itself.

*“This Order and Consolidated Action Plan will lead to continued school improvement and student achievement at Hope High School.” Commissioner's Decision and Order, p25.*

Improvement in student outcomes is broken down into three sub-areas – success in getting to and staying in school, success in terms of the skills and knowledge we want students to master while in school and the success they achieve in their next steps in life, particularly, success in higher education.

<b>Student Success at Hope: What We Are Trying To Accomplish</b>
Students Go To School And Stay
Attendance is almost perfect. Tardiness is almost non-existent and always for understandable reasons. Suspensions are rare. Dropouts are in single digits percentage wise.
Students Succeed in School
Test scores go up, dramatically, in all academic areas and for all students. Exhibitions evidence high skills in problem solving, communication, collaboration and other life-long skills. A vast majority of students graduate, graduate on time and graduate prepared for their next step in life.
Students Have Successful Futures
Graduates are “better” for having attended Hope. They enroll in college, persist and graduate. They participate in the communities in which they live. Hope grads get and keep good jobs.

### **Current Status**

The rationale for the organization of this framework is based on a few simple tenets. First, students need to go and stay in school for school to be effective. While intuitively obvious, too often reforms are based on meeting the needs of students who persist, while a deeper challenge is retaining – more often recovering – students who have dropped out or who are about to leave. Thus, the related measures for this area include – dropout, suspension, tardiness and attendance rates.

Last year the four-year dropout rate for a cohort of students at Hope was about 52%. In other words, of the incoming 9<sup>th</sup> graders who came to Hope in the fall of 1999 – the graduating class of 2004 – 52 out of 100 dropped out. This compares to 38% district average and a 17% statewide average. In terms of suspensions, there were 777 incidents involving more than 400 different students, leading to a total of 1539 days lost for learning. Attendance, the basic measure of if students are coming to school, was at 80%, while the district average for high schools was 83%. Data about students arriving late for school – tardy – is currently unavailable.

Success in school – the second sub-section to the “Student Success at Hope” framework – is the most familiar. It references traditional measures of student success – test scores, other evidence of achievement of standards, and graduation rates.

Last year the graduation rate for 100 incoming 9<sup>th</sup> graders was 48%. In terms of academic measures, last year was another year of improvement concerning the number of students approaching “proficiency” of state standards in English and Math. However, while 40% of 11<sup>th</sup> graders demonstrated proficiency on one area of writing, in none of the other remaining six sub-areas in English Language Arts and Math did 25% of students achieve proficiency.

The state uses an “indexed” measure to monitor and measure school performance that tells us that there was positive progress across in both English and Math for all groups of students based on a rolling average of student scores that includes data from years past. However you look at it, some progress is being made and literacy and numeracy remain enormous issues at Hope.

The last area of measure regarding student outcomes focuses on student futures. The most difficult to measure - and maybe the most important – this area includes measures related to higher education matriculation and persistence. Do Hope students go to college and do they succeed there? There are many other indicators that could be used to measure student success after high school, but the increasing demands placed on citizens and the evolving nature of our economy make some form of higher education and essential experience.

The data systems for tracking student futures is underdeveloped in K-12 education as a whole, too few Hope students seek out, attend and succeed in higher education.

As described and taken as a whole, Student Success at Hope is the ultimate goal of improvement work at Hope. And while some initial improvements in student outcomes should come quickly - particularly reductions in dropout, suspensions and increases in attendance - the timeframe for significant improvements in test scores and measures of student futures needs to be understood in terms of years, not months.

## **Future Expectations**

Despite the realities of how long it takes to improve student outcomes, it is still possible and essential to identify ambitious, long term goals for Hope in terms of academic student outcomes.

Within the category of *Students Go To and Stay In School*, over time the attendance rate should be in the high 90s. Likewise, the dropout rate for a four-year cohort should be in the single digits. Suspensions should be reduced ten-fold.

In the area of *Student Succeeding in School*, the numbers should “flip” at Hope. That is, at the current time a small minority of students demonstrates proficiency in both Math and English Language Arts as defined by federal and state regulations. We should expect to see the vast majority demonstrate proficiency with a small minority unable to do so.

We should see significant gains in every “sub-group” of students – all students, poorer students, students of color, students with special needs, English as a Second language students, boys and girls. These gains should outpace the yearly escalation of academic goals. And we should expect to close the “achievement gap” that exists between students who are economically more advantaged (and more often white) and students who are poorer (and more often “of color”) so that Hope students are truly “catching up” to and then exceeding expectations.

In addition to improvements in academic indicators, success at Hope will be characterized by the development of responsible, young citizens. Citizens, who know how to participate in civic activities, work with and communicate clearly with others and problem solve effectively.

In the category of *Students Have Successful Futures*, every Hope graduate should adequately prepared for and able to make a choice about going on to higher education. They do not have to go. There are economic and personal factors that may lead to different choices, but they should be qualified to go – without a need for significant remediation - as a result of their years in public school.

## **Near Term Expectations**

Work is underway to identify specific, yearly targets for each of the areas of Student Success reviewed above. A full framework of measures and first year benchmarks related to student performance will be released before the beginning of SY 05-06 in the context of Hope’s POP school improvement plan.

### **Recommendations regarding the “Bottom Line – Student Success at Hope.”**

In order to continue the good work begun, there are a number of things that must happen in the near future that specifically relate to the areas identified in the broad category of “Student Success at Hope.”

This coming school year there must be an immediate and intense effort to:

- 1) Get students to school (increase attendance),
- 2) Keep them in school (reduce suspensions and dropout)
- 3) Increase aspirations of all students at Hope and especially the incoming 9<sup>th</sup> graders.

Future determinations of progress and success at Hope, this year and in years to come, will be measured by many things including improvements in the measures related to these three priority areas.

## **Part II - The Commissioner's Decision and Order - Areas of Compliance**

Because of the urgency related to the Hope High School Complex and its levels of performance there are intermediate, process goals established in the Order. These inputs are designed to contribute significantly to the student success measures reviewed in the previous section of this report. Thus, the specific areas of compliance articulated in the Order can be framed as investments toward the larger good of student success at Hope.

The Order itself can be described in terms of four general areas of compliance. The areas of compliance include: 1) The establishment of three autonomous, small learning communities, 2) increased “personalization” of learning for students, 3) professionalizing the workplace with and for staff; and 4) the involvement of parents, students and community members as full partners. Each of these areas is further defined by a set of specific, measurable sub-elements originating within the Order.

*Note: Definitions of a fifth area of compliance - District Leadership and Support - are under development. These will articulate the expectations placed on the district to support efforts at Hope.*

<b>Areas of Compliance</b>	
<b>Three Small Learning Communities</b>	<b>Personalization of Learning</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>✓ Community</li><li>✓ Clear Autonomy</li><li>✓ Academy Themes</li><li>✓ Learning Standards</li><li>✓ Attention to Student Interests</li><li>✓ Appropriate Schedule</li><li>✓ 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> Grade Academy Structure</li><li>✓ System for Ensuring Student Success</li><li>✓ Shared Governance</li><li>✓ Data Driven Planning</li><li>✓ Sufficient Resources</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>✓ Focused Instructional Strategies</li><li>✓ Vibrant Advisory Structure</li><li>✓ Committed Adult Advocates</li><li>✓ Substantive Family Connections</li><li>✓ Personal Learning Plans for All</li><li>✓ Comprehensive Counseling Applied</li></ul>
<b>Professionalism in Practice</b>	<b>Active Parents/Community Partners</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>✓ Strong Leadership</li><li>✓ Effective Teaching and Learning</li><li>✓ Teacher Quality and Leadership</li><li>✓ Appropriate Case Loads</li><li>✓ High Quality Professional Development</li><li>✓ Adequate Resources and Support</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>✓ High Quality Plans for Inclusion</li><li>✓ Meaningful Participation in Governance</li><li>✓ Sustained Organization</li><li>✓ Written Community Partnership Agreements</li><li>✓ Real Educational Connections</li><li>✓ Inclusive Curriculum Design</li><li>✓ Coordinated Delivery of Services</li><li>✓ Links Through Advisories</li><li>✓ Meaningful Youth Leadership</li></ul>
<b>Methods of Measuring Progress and Success</b>	
SALT Survey, Local Interviews, Observations/Learning Walks, Review of Artifacts, Test Scores, Data Points, Professional Judgment	

Each of these four sections is addressed separately in this report. In each of the following four sections, a vision of success is provided, describing in future terms the success at Hope. These descriptive sections are not a characterization of the current status, but of the desired results sought through the Decision and Order. While these descriptions stand as current representations of desired success, they will evolve over time to reflect input from other interested parties and experience with implementation.

A review of current status comes next with narrative descriptions of baseline data included. Lastly, there is a summary set of findings that categorizes each of the sub-elements in question as either an area of “strong performance,” “areas in need of improvement,” or as an area of “critical concern.”

## Area #1 – Three, Autonomous Small Learning Communities

*“The three Small Learning Communities at Hope can be viable and effective learning environments.” Commissioner’s Decision and Order, p 22.*

<b>Three Autonomous Small Learning Communities: What are we trying to accomplish</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Community</li> <li>▪ Autonomy</li> <li>▪ Academy Themes</li> </ul>	<p>The Hope Complex will be home to three vibrant, world-class communities of learning. Three distinct “schools” running independently with a limited number of operational issues managed through the Campus Coordinating Council. Deep, rich and distinct academic “themes” supported by community partners are evident and persistent for each SLC.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Learning Standards</li> <li>▪ Student Interests</li> <li>▪ Schedule</li> </ul>	<p>There are clearly articulated, ambitious learning standards for students that are understood by all students, teachers, parents and community members. All students have access to high-level coursework. Student needs and interests drive everything – staffing, schedule, professional development, etc. There is a schedule in place that supports personalized approaches to student learning. The schedule also accommodates deeply integrated partnerships and students “going to school” outside of the facility at partner sites.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> Grade Academy Structure</li> </ul>	<p>There is a 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grade academy structure that promotes the identity of each SLC, allows for sufficient exploration on the part of “undeclared” 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> graders, prevents dropouts and promotes personalization.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ System for Ensuring Student Success</li> </ul>	<p>The district Student Success Initiative is fully implemented in collaboration with community partners. Expectations regarding student and staff behaviors are reviewed and understood by all.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Shared Governance</li> </ul>	<p>Three independent School Improvement Teams are up and running, fully representative of parents, students, teachers and community members. The focus of SIT work is high stakes educational issues, particularly raising student achievement and the personalization of learning for each and every Hope student. Group process is managed at a high level.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Inclusive, Data Driven Planning</li> </ul>	<p>Improvement planning is data-rich, transparent, results oriented, framed within clear, feasible timelines and followed up on regularly and responsibly. A wide variety of constituents participate in meaningful roles.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Sufficient Resources</li> </ul>	<p>There are sufficient staff and other resources to achieve the goals of the Order and to carry out the school’s mission.</p>

## **Current Status**

The three Small Learning Communities (SLCs) have been in place for more than a year so there is already some sense of identity has already been established for each. A sense of faculty “spirit,” as measured by Salt survey data, is one indicator of sense of community. Last year at Hope not quite 60% of the staff within two of the three small learning communities reported a strong sense of spirit “most of the time.” Within the third the responses were significantly lower. Less than a third of students reported a strong and persistent sense of “belonging” at Hope.

Other indicators of “community” include how well professionals work together and communicate about their craft. Almost half of respondents identified “lack of support” from colleagues as a moderate to major problem. Between 65 and almost 95 percent of staff did report the routine sharing of work; depending on which SLC they call home. There were also consistent concerns by staff across the three SLCs concerning the “lack of information” available concerning reform efforts. There are no available tools to measure “identity” but plans are underway to gather baseline information about this from students, staff and community at the very beginning of the next school year.

The Order prescribes the eventual division of many typical school functions among the three separate SLCs such as curriculum design and revision, professional development, teacher evaluation and student discipline, while establishing a Hope Complex Coordinating Council made up of representatives from each of the three SIT’s. Other facets of “autonomy” represented through governance structures are meant to include – separate School Improvement Teams (SITs), a Director’s Cabinet to deal with issues of common interest as well as separately elected student governments for each SLC.

Current Providence School District (PSD) strategies for implementing the aspects of the Order related to establishing three, autonomous SLCs includes the three new, incoming administrators are now acting as a “team” with complementary roles and responsibilities. They are dealing jointly with issues of scheduling, staffing and facilities.

The strategy of “joint, but temporary, entry” into their new school and into their new roles is supportable at this time. The need to present a unified sense of leadership to staff and students, learn together about the issues that have divided others in the recent past and to, in fact, prepare themselves for their separate responsibilities by starting together makes sense. The risk is that by acting together as one group, they may establish work processes that make it more difficult to achieve full autonomy down the road. Indications to date are that the risk is outweighed by the benefits of joint entry.

Each small learning community has a designated theme – Arts, Information Technology (IT) and Leadership, respectively. Whether these themes are applied with depth, substance and persistence are critical issues related to Order compliance.

To date, integrity of the thematic approach has been maintained at current, recent levels. There is evidence in the form of curriculum materials and public information that themes

are real at Hope. The depth and pervasiveness of the integration of these themes across courses available within each SLC must be a focus this coming school year.

Reportedly, there were few if any Advanced Placement (AP) classes at Hope in recent years. This is one indication of the need to provide greater access to higher-level course for all students.

A schedule is under development that is based, in part, on student interest. Forms used by Guidance Counselors to determine student course assignments were analyzed to determine how many sections of which courses would be required. While the Order envisions a stronger process for accessing student interest in the form of a focused activity, the basic intent of the Order has been met. In the future, more elaborate processes for determining student “need and interest” will be employed - via the process for developing Individual Learning Plans - to ensure that this principle is applied fully in developing the schedule and more importantly in informing the staffing decisions that follow schedule development.

A cogent and acceptable plan has been presented to create a 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> Grade academy structure that holds the promise of orienting incoming students to the high school experience and to allow them, when necessary, to explore different thematic approaches represented within each of the separate SLCs. This plan allows for intense attention to literacy needs, while avoiding a return to the deleterious tracking of students.

Past survey results suggest a strong need at Hope for work related to student behavior. More than a quarter of students say that most of the time their peers have “trouble getting along with each other.” Almost one third of students reported they had been robbed one or more times at school. At rates that exceed district averages and in two cases approach 80% of respondents, teachers agreed or strongly agreed “ students in my class disrupt what others are doing.”

The district has just recently adopted their *Student Success Initiative* as a framework for creating mutually respectful and safe learning environments in its schools. There have been discussions about this framework and the need to align Hope and district approaches to creating a more positive school culture.

This spring a “transitional” School Improvement Team (SIT) was convened soon after the designation of three new incoming administrators. There was a genuine invitation to made by school administrators to parents and community representatives to participate and progress has been made toward resolving a number of important issues: including the nature of Hope’s Performance-Based Graduation Requirement (PBGR) as directed by the Regent’s High School regulations, adoption of the schools master schedule; and the hiring of staff.

The times and regularity of SIT meetings must be balanced to support the deep and persistent participation of all parties. Consensus was identified as the decision-making mode to use, and while decisions have been made, the process and clarity of when and

what decisions are being made must be improved. The overall role and purposes of the SIT must be addressed directly to support full and effective implementation of the shared decision-making.

There is an obvious commitment on the part of the incoming administrators to thoughtful, databased planning with a strong focus on student learning. Likewise, district structures are in place to support a serious effort. Groups have been convened, data reviewed and processes begun to create short, mid and long range plans articulated via an integrated planning template known as POP – Providence One Plan.

The challenges in this area include securing the time and focus on a thorough process with consistent participants who delve deeply into both data analysis and strategy development. Without this organizational rigor, the process will devolve into a less than meaningful process through which a plan may be developed, but one that lacks buy-in and substance. The commitment of the school-based leadership to a serious and rigorous process is unquestioned, however assistance in this area is essential.

Sufficient staff, facilities that are conducive to learning and other resources necessary for high quality instruction and other targeted educational experiences including but not limited to extensive opportunities for learning in real world settings through substantive community partnerships is one goal of the Order.

In general, Hope has received a relative “fair share” of resources when compared to other High Schools in the district. Some will say they have received significantly more. However, this should not be misunderstood as an indication that sufficient resources are available.

There may be places where greater efficiencies can be accomplished and innovative approaches that maximize community partner contributions should be explored, however given the demands of an integrated, thematic, authentic approach to instruction and the priority placed on personalization at Hope, traditional staffing structures are unlikely to suffice in the long run.

Steps have been taken to augment staff levels at Hope to this end. In addition to a group of teacher leaders specified in the Order, two Lead Coaches will be assigned to Hope in Math and English Language Arts. A Parent/Community Coordinator is also being hired.

### **Strongest Performance, Areas In Need and Areas Of Critical Concern**

The areas of strongest performance include:

- ✓ Schedule: The successful development of a flexible schedule that will allow for genuine community participation and in depth instruction.

- ✓ 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> Grade Academy: The planning of a 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> Grade Academy structure that will allow for entry orientation to High School for incoming 9<sup>th</sup> graders as well as the exploration of SLC themes.
- ✓ Data-Based Planning: Initial evidence of a data rich and student outcome oriented approach to improvement planning.

The areas in need of improvement include:

- ✓ Community: The resilience and enthusiasm of staff is a foundation for future, essential work on building community at Hope.
- ✓ Autonomy and identity: Vigilance must be maintained to assure that eventual separation of functions and clear identities for each SLC are achieved.
- ✓ Learning Standards: The clear articulation of “essential learnings” that represent what students need to know and be able to do to must be developed to serve as a guide for all programmatic decisions.
- ✓ Shared Governance: The recruitment and full inclusion of parents and community members as part of the SIT and the full articulation of SIT roles and responsibilities are among SIT related priorities.
- ✓ Sufficient Resources: The PPSD must assure the appropriation of adequate staff and fiscal resources to achieve the elements of the Order.

There are no areas of critical concern identified at this time.

At this time, the overall progress in compliance area #1 - *Three, Autonomous Small Learning Communities* - is determined to be **satisfactory**.

## Area #2 – Personalization

*“Personalization is a learning process in which schools help students assess their own talents and aspirations, plan a pathway toward their own purposes, work cooperatively with others on challenging tasks, maintain a record of their explorations, and demonstrate learning against clear standards in a wide variety of media, all with the close support of adult mentors and guides.” RI HS Regulations.*

<b>Personalization at Hope: What are we trying to accomplish.</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Instruction</li></ul>	Work at Hope is personal. Instruction is rooted in relevance, relationships and individualized. It is driven by student needs, interests and learning styles. High standards are maintained.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Advisory Structure</li><li>▪ Adult Advocate</li><li>▪ Family connections</li></ul>	Advisories are a deeply rooted and embedded part of the school through which service referrals and family communications are managed. Every Hope student has an adult advocate whom they can identify. There is two-way, monthly communication between advisors and parents regarding how their child is doing in school and what the plans are for next steps. Staff is out in the communities where students live – exploring, learning and building relationships.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Personal Learning Plans</li></ul>	Personal Learning Plans are the heart of the matter at Hope. They are developed and implemented fully. They guide all activities related to student activities and direction. They are developed in partnerships with student, families and appropriate community partners. They are taken seriously and amended regularly.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Counseling</li></ul>	The Comprehensive Counseling model is applied consistently and pervasively at Hope.

### Current Status

Personalization at Hope is a “work in progress.” There are many strong relationships between individual teachers and students. There is a clear sense of commitment on the part of remaining staff toward greater personalization. This was a condition of “recommitment” on their part in order to be asked back to Hope for next year. The nearly fifty percent of new staff being hired this summer also know that personalization is an expectation for their work as incoming teachers. However, work remains to develop an institutionalized approach to personalization for each and every student, defining what this means in terms of roles and responsibilities as well as how the district will support this at the school level.

The 2004 Salt survey showed that only about 10% of students reported often getting individual advising and help from teachers. Likewise about 13% reported that they felt comfortable “most of the time” talking to a teacher about personal issues, 27% said they felt the same about academic issues. About 20% reported that teachers took a personal interest in students most of the time or always.

The Commissioner’s Decision and Order links personalization most directly to the establishment of 1) student advisories, 2) Individual Learning Plans and 3) the implementation of the Comprehensive Counseling model as described in RI HS Regulations.

There have been various and different efforts within the three small learning communities to establish advisories. The Order initially demanded the establishment of shortened advisories for the remainder of SY 04-05. This aspect of the Order was revised in consultation with and with the concurrence of the Special Master. The reasoning for this adjustment included the fact that nearly 50% of the teaching staff would be new at Hope in the beginning of SY 05-06.

Successful advisories depend on the relationships established between students and teachers. In addition, advisories are dependent on skills the training for which has not been provided consistently in the past. Given the changeover in staff and the lack of sufficient support, the full implementation of advisories has been deferred until this coming fall.

It is unclear at this time what training supports will be provided for Hope staff over the course of the next year, however there are initial steps planned that evidence a PPSD commitment to the support process. These steps include a summer academy agenda that includes an introduction to advisories.

There are many staff who serve as effective adult advocates at Hope. Survey data indicates that roughly one third of staff previously reported serving as an adult advocate. As of now, there is no apparent system of assignment: training and oversight that would make this process a school-wide effort. Plans are developing to do this.

Family connections at Hope are informal and based on individual efforts on the part of individual staff and families. There is an expressed commitment to build these kinds of deep, meaningful relationships between staff and families in part through the advisory structure. Plans are being created this summer to do so.

Individual Learning Plans are to be in place for all Hope students by mid-October. The PPSD has developed a promising template for these plans. It is unclear at this time what the process will be to create, monitor and adjust these plans.

The Comprehensive Counseling Model identified in the Commissioner's Order has its roots in the Providence School System. Developed in partnership with Providence this approach to school counseling is consistent with national models.

Personalization of instruction evidenced by attention to individual student needs and interests, placement in out-of-school learning sites and individual demonstration of competency is at its beginning stages at Hope. As community partnerships are developed and come to fruition, these resources will allow greater access to real world learning opportunities.

### **Strongest Performance, Areas In Need and Areas Of Critical Concern**

The areas of strongest performance include:

- ✓ Comprehensive School Counseling Model: Genuine efforts have been made to implement this approach.

The areas in need of improvement include:

- ✓ Advisories: Developing a clear plan for implementing and monitoring an effective advisory model that includes a clear process for identifying and supporting adult advocates and establishing and growing strong family connections.
- ✓ Individual Learning Plans: Developing a detailed implementation plan for creating ILPs for each Hope student.
- ✓ Instruction: Further articulation of the criteria defining personalization in teaching and learning.

There are no areas of critical concern identified at this time.

At this time, the overall progress in compliance area #2 – *Personalization at Hope* - is determined to be **satisfactory**.

### Area #3 – Professionalism at Hope

*“In order to improve their instructional practices and ability to personalize instruction, teachers at Hope High School require meaningful and collaborative time on task, training and professional development, adequate resources and a network of supports.” Order p 17.*

<b>Professionalism at Hope -What are we trying to accomplish.</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Leadership</li></ul>	Hope is a model of professionalism. It is a place where strong support and strong accountability meet. Leaders put an emphasis on articulating a vision and a mission and they maintain a persistent focus on student learning.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Teaching and Learning</li><li>▪ Case Loads</li></ul>	The building teems with professional activities – all hours - such as, team meetings at which student work is the centerpiece; extra-help sessions with students, meetings with parents. Instruction is based on the district scope and sequence and characterized by high expectations for all students. Reaching out beyond the school walls to find ways to engage students is the norm not the exception. Instruction and assessment are seamless, integrated functions evidenced, in part, by performance tasks that take full advantage of real world, service-learning opportunities provided by partners. Caseloads are consistent with district and state policy.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Teacher Quality and Leadership</li></ul>	Staff expertise is characterized by strong subject matter knowledge, a wide variety of teaching strategies, a deep familiarity with student interests and learning styles, as well as, access to up to date information about community-based opportunities for students. Staff participates in governance.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Evaluation System</li></ul>	There is a credible and professional evaluation process based on high standards of professional performance. This system succeeds in identifying and responding to identified areas of strength and weakness. There are clear avenues of recognition, support and consequence.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Professional Development</li></ul>	Professional development is both systemic and systematic. There is a strong plan for professional development. Professional development is deeply rooted in student and staff performance data. All staff have My Plans (district sanctioned, individual professional development plans) that are related to school goals, evaluation results and student learning needs and interests. There are high quality professional learning activities offered through out the school year, which are consistent with the prescriptions of the Order.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Resources and Support</li></ul>	There are sufficient staff and other resources so that teachers can fulfill their responsibilities. Teacher leaders are in place and have a positive impact on the quality of instruction.

## **Current Status**

The incoming administrators at Hope have demonstrated strong leadership in a number of fundamental and important ways. They have taken the Commissioner's Order seriously evidenced by their attention to various objectives and related timelines. Upon their arrival late this spring, before the beginning of their formal appointments, they began the long and essential process of building relationships, creating an acceptable schedule, meeting with community representatives and recruiting parent leaders. They pursued, interviewed and hired a number of qualified staff to fill the nearly fifty staff openings existing at Hope.

The longer test of leadership will come as the school year approaches and begins. At that time, efforts to establish advisories, revise curriculum and instruction, recruit and engage parent and community partners and attend to the myriad of challenges facing Hope will be underway more fully.

In order to hold the school administrators accountable fairly, the district must continue to provide basic management tools. Up to date, easily accessible budget information about available school and district-based resources is essential.

Nearly half of teacher respondents in 2004 identified "lack of time for planning" and "support" as significant issues. The inclusion of common planning time as well as the commitment on the part of remaining and incoming staff to be available to students and parents, participate in professional development activities and to achieve the intent of the Order as it relates to teaching and learning all hold great promise for the coming school year.

Continuation of *Institute for Learning* programs and activities are positive steps to personalize instruction and build stronger teacher skills and knowledge to address the academic needs of students at Hope. Efforts to focus on student work using criteria-based rubrics are evident throughout Hope, though the consistency of their use is in question. In 2004, within two of the three SLCs less than 20% of teachers reported that a focus on student work samples was routine. There is a commitment on the part of the district to emphasize the review of student work as a key strategy in improving instruction.

The Commissioner's Order raises an expectation that teaching and learning "encompass a variety of instructional opportunities that extend beyond the traditional school day." The SALT data relates to this challenge. Last year, on average more than 70% of teachers at Hope said that at least weekly the "real world applications of course material" were discussed and emphasized. Less than 20% of students reported that most of the time or always that their "classroom activities are connected to the world outside the classroom" with similar results regarding the relevance of school work to their "lives outside of school."

Not quite two thirds of teachers responding to the SALT survey reported satisfaction with the opportunities they have to participate in decision-making. Recent steps have already been taken to include teachers in decision-making significant issues such as the complex-schedule, choices regarding performance-based graduation requirements and staff hiring.

Despite the turmoil of the past few years, there is still support for school improvement initiatives at Hope. Just more than half of teachers asked reported strong support of this kind. A condition

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for remaining at Hope was full participation, support and leadership of education reform efforts. New hires were apprised of this expectation as well.

Thus, there is an explicit expectation that staff support reform and a commensurate expectation that systems are established to support their engagement beyond representation of teachers, by teachers on the SIT. Specifically, ways of sharing information, making decisions and clarifying other roles for staff in the process are paramount.

The teachers at Hope are good. They care. Overall, they are committed to excellence and improvement. The process of “recommitment” outlined in the Order and carried out in March allowed staff to make personal, informed decisions about whether they could agree to a set of conditions to remain at Hope. A significant majority of permanent staff chose to stay.

The hiring of “teacher leaders” to support the continuous improvement of instruction was an important step. However, there are remaining issues regarding teacher quality. The district report card posted on the Rhode Island Department of Education website reports that more than one third of the teachers at Hope had not met criteria defining “highly qualified” staff. Last year nearly one quarter of teaching assignments were held by long-term substitutes. Recent efforts to recruit new staff have been successful. Openings remain, but it is likely that a sufficient complement of teachers will be in place for the beginning of school.

The development of a high quality evaluation system described in the Order is in its initial planning stages. This kind of accountability function is a critical partner to the systems of support that are under development.

More than a third of teacher respondents identified “lack of training” as a moderate or major problem. While most teachers have My Plans- individual professional development plans for district educators - it is unclear how strongly these plans are tied to student learning needs and interests. There is agreement by all parties on the need for a unified, multi-year plan for professional development at Hope. However, at this time, it is unclear how that plan will be developed.

In terms of the area of adequate resources and support, good work is being done with what is available. School and district staff are engaged in noble efforts to address the issues at Hope. Some additional instructional materials will be designated for Hope this summer through the auspices of the Order. However, given the challenges and related prescriptions within the Order it is questionable whether there are enough of these kinds of resources available to support the changes that need to occur.

### **Strongest Performance, Areas In Need and Areas Of Critical Concern**

The areas of strongest performance include:

- ✓ Leadership: Positive, respectful entry on the part of the new administrative team.
- ✓ Teacher Leaders: Hiring of key staff to coach and support staff.

The areas in need of improvement:

- ✓ Teaching and Learning: A comprehensive picture of what “authentic, personalized learning” means once developed and disseminated will serve as a cornerstone of efforts to improve instruction.

- ✓ Teacher Quality: A full complement of fully qualified staff is the heart of successful school operations.
- ✓ Evaluation Systems: Plans for the development of a performance-based accountability system will serve as an anchor for expectation regarding personalized approaches to teaching and learning.
- ✓ Professional Development: A long term, comprehensive, high quality plan for professional development will serve as a strong support for teachers at Hope.
- ✓ Adequate Resources and Support: Continuing to analyze the staffing patterns necessary to achieve strong and satisfactory student outcomes must serve as a guide for future budget development.

There are no areas of critical concern identified at this time.

At this time, the overall progress in compliance area #3- *Professionalism at Hope* - is determined to be – *satisfactory*.

## Area # 4 – Active Parents And Engaged Community

*“...true partners, not guests.”* Commissioner’s Decision and Order, P. 3

<b>Active Parents and Engaged Community at Hope: What are we trying to accomplish.</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ High Quality Plans for Parent Involvement</li> <li>▪ Participation in Governance</li> </ul>	<p>Parent and community engagement at Hope is persistent, full and is the result of a high quality planning effort. Parents are welcome at Hope. They are present during the day in and out of classrooms as volunteers and observers. School “events” are filled with parents and community partners. Parents and community partners are fully involved in governance.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Sustained Organization</li> </ul>	<p>There is assistance provided to organize parents into a vibrant, active organized group that creates and follows-up on innovations to support student learning. Alumni are organized and active in supporting and challenging the school system.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Written Community Partnership Agreements</li> <li>▪ Real Educational Connections</li> </ul>	<p>Clear, results-oriented, significant and written partnership agreements that specify roles and responsibilities exist and drive partner activities. There are various connections made and nurtured with Providence Middle Schools, other High Schools and, in particular, with higher education. These “connections” result in high rates of matriculation, persistence and graduation into and out of high education institutions for Hope graduates.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Inclusive Curriculum Design</li> </ul>	<p>Community partners and parents are deeply involved in decisions and planning regarding curriculum. They contribute as plans are developed, not just as respondents to plans created by others.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Coordinated Delivery of Services</li> <li>▪ Linked Through Advisories</li> </ul>	<p>The High School is the center of a coordinated service delivery system that includes student support services, social services and other opportunities for student engagement with partners. At least one family member – other than the student – is contacted at least once every two months concerning the status and performance of the student in question. Families receive regular and timely updates about and invitations to school activities. Parent Compacts are agreed to and signed by a large majority of parents.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Meaningful Youth Leadership</li> </ul>	<p>Youth leadership is obvious and taken seriously at Hope as there is a vibrant, active student government through which student voices are heard on a myriad of topics – social, academic, operational, political and financial.</p>

## **Current Status**

At present, parent and community engagement at Hope seems dependent on individual initiative rather than a result of a planned, sustained set of strategies and activities.

The SALT survey response rates by parents are themselves low – averaging about 10% for 2004. A large majority of those who did respond report that they already think “the school views parents as important partners.” When asked about various discrete activities such as “being asked to volunteer,” responses to parent concerns or communication from school about good news or problems related to their child, positive responses are lower.

There is a strong commitment toward genuine and meaningful parent and community engagement among the existing staff and incoming leadership. In 2004 teachers reported strong responses regarding their roles in communication, relationships and problem solving.

Upon their entry to the school, the incoming administrative team invited every parent at Hope to attend one of number of “forums.” A handful of parents responded. This speaks to the magnitude of the task of rebuilding relationships with parents and of renewing efforts with community partners. This is another area of enormous potential and enormous need for Hope.

The Commissioner’s Order places significant focus on this aspect of school reform. It is expected that parents and community partners will be engaged as true partners, “not guests.” This is defined as participating in high stakes decisions from the beginning of deliberations with some form of approval status. That is, they help create, they participate in final decisions and they work on important issues.

When it comes to involvement in decisions parents at Hope have historically reported low satisfaction. Less than one in seven parents reported that the school did this “well.”

Initially, there was low parent representation and community participation has been modest in these transitional SITs. The ratio of teachers to parents and community members is meant to be a simple majority as prescribed by the current work agreement. However, while more than a dozen teachers participated regularly in initial SIT meetings, at times the numbers of parents was zero or one and community partners were only slightly better represented. It should be acknowledged that in general genuine efforts were made to recruit and engage community partners and parents and that specifically outreach was attempted to ensure adequate SIT representation of both.

Initial outreach and engagement of community partners has been genuine and positive. Desired outcomes, roles and related responsibilities need to be articulated in clear, concise written agreement between school officials and partner organizations in order to

ensure that out of school opportunities are available and accessed so that students can benefit from the authentic learning experiences articulated in the Order.

The discrete steps already taken to engage parents and community partners are good beginnings. However, a comprehensive, fully articulated approach must be developed soon. Some community representatives and some parents are already engaged in governance activities. There are templates for written agreements, but it is unclear what the process will be for crafting the specifics of these.

In terms of participation in curriculum design, a few partners have been engaged somewhat. However, as these processes are driven at the district level and then rolled out at the school level, it is expected that partner participation will increase this fall. The Order specifies that community partners shall not hold simply an “advisory” role in curricular decision-making, but a more central one.

The advisory structure is identified in the Order as the principal linking mechanism between the school and families. Advisors are meant to establish and maintain communication with the families of the students for whom they are the designated “advisor.” As required by the Order, training is taking place this summer to begin to prepare staff for this new and demanding role. More support and structure must be developed as the school year approaches.

Youth Leadership is an area of great potential growth at Hope. District-wide efforts could be a model for school-based activities. Students have been involved in governance activities, though the support for their participation must be increased so that they are active partners. Students have been included on hiring committees and the substance of student-developed set of criteria was incorporated into the hiring process.

The full integration and connection between traditional school operations and existing student support initiative such as the H2O program are essential. There have been a series of meetings to firm up these relationships, but a full articulation of process and desired outcomes remains to be developed.

### **Strongest Performance, Areas of Greatest Need and Areas Of Critical Concern**

The areas of strongest performance include:

- ✓ Participation in Governance: Immediate steps were taken to engage parent representatives on the Transitional SIT.

The areas of greatest need for improvement include:

- ✓ High Quality Plans for Parent Involvement: Clarity of these approaches integrated into the schools POP plan will be a strong step forward.
- ✓ Sustained Organization: Supporting the formation of separate Parent, Student and Alumni groups will provide a basis for greater participation and ownership of school wide reform efforts.

- ✓ Written Community Partner Agreements: As stipulated in the Order these “contracts” will support ongoing collaboration.
- ✓ Real Education Connections: Building relationships with middle schools and institutions of higher education will help create a seamless educational pathway for Hope students.
- ✓ Inclusive Curriculum Design: Partners need to be fully involved in curricular design.
- ✓ Coordinated Delivery of Services: Expanding current approaches to student support through the emerging advisory system will address this issue.
- ✓ Meaningful Youth Leadership: Schools are all about young people. Steps must be taken immediately when students return to school to establish strong structures to tap student leadership.

There are no areas of critical concern identified at this time.

At this time, the overall progress in compliance area #4- *Active Parents/Engaged Community* - is determined to be **satisfactory**.

### **Part III – What Now?**

Overall, progress toward improvement at Hope as described in the Commissioner's Decision and Order has begun, has been steady and at this point in time progress has been satisfactory. Much has been accomplished and many positive steps have been taken.

Factors that have contributed positively include the:

- Resilience and professionalism of Hope staff;
- Good work of the three incoming administrators;
- Support of specific district staff;
- Strength of particular district-wide systems that support school-based work at Hope;
- Patience of students with the change process;
- Persistence of parent and community representatives, and;
- Specificity and flexibility of the Commissioner's Decision and Order.

### **Emerging Issues**

There have been and remain significant challenges to success. The turmoil of transition of school and district leadership has been disruptive. It almost always is. When senior leaders move on, subordinates are placed in a difficult context. Despite the challenging situation, the seriousness and significance of the Commissioner's Decision and Order and the day to day challenges of running a large school district, district staff have, in general, been supportive of the work at Hope.

There is an emerging tension between efforts to work at and for Hope specifically and an eagerness to support district initiatives addressing issues system-wide. For example, there are needs to create a long-term professional development plan for the school that joins district expectations and resources with school-based needs. Ideally this should be done before the beginning of school.

While it is clear that there is competence and expertise at the district level regarding professional development and planning, the question is whether there is sufficient capacity to support the creation of a plan for Hope through a district process within the timeframes established by the Order? Can these processes move things forward as quickly as needed at Hope? If not, what other mechanism can be put in place to achieve success? What are the costs, in terms of sustainability and capacity-building at the school and district levels, of establishing parallel processes? What is the appropriate balance between being patient with larger, more complicated systems approaches versus applying some urgency and creating special approaches to meeting the needs at Hope?

The timelines established for the work at Hope are ambitious. Allowances have been made up to now to support the district systems to serve as vehicles for reform work at Hope. This decision is a testimony to the positive steps taken at the district level in Providence to improve system support for its schools in general. This will remain an

operating principle until and if there are needs to accelerate work at Hope to meet the expectations of the Order.

Another emerging issue is, how exceptional is Hope High School? On the one hand, Hope represents many of the challenges of other Providence schools and many schools around our nation. On the other hand, Hope is the subject of the Commissioner's Decision and Order, a unique invention itself. That Order demands immediate and unprecedented action to address long standing issues at this school.

There have been decisions made to treat Hope differently. This spring saw the designation of a few, specially assigned positions at Hope: Leader Coaches in Math and English language Arts to support embedded professional learning, as well as, the development of a Parent and Community Support person. In addition, the hiring of new staff at Hope was done in the manner of other site-based schools without regard to seniority. This allowance provided greater flexibility for the SIT at Hope to recruit staff.

These decisions benefited Hope, but came at the expense of others within the Providence Public Schools. Resources are scarce already and there is another series of budget reductions in the works. The decision to invest in Hope was based on the premise that resources matter.

Throwing money at any situation as the sole solution is almost always ill advised and ineffective. However, there are emerging indications that the model described for Hope needs at least different if not increased resource allocations to achieve success. Simply assuming that personalization, deep community engagement and higher levels of learning can be accomplished by redirecting existing resources would be as irresponsible as simply increasing resources without any plan for change or related systems of accountability.

Thus issues related to district capacity – not competence – as well as issues regarding adequate resources loom large for the work at Hope and beyond. How can we build a system of school improvement that honors district-wide initiatives while addressing school-based issues directly and effectively? How can we change the nature of teaching and learning at Hope, while struggling in a context of limited resources? What does it take, actually, to achieve a vision of personalized education, where most everyone succeeds?

District leadership, in the partnership with the Providence Teachers' Union embodied by the Joint Labor Management Intervention Committee that has been established, will be an essential variable in supporting the process of change at the school. That group has resolved some complex, important issues. However, further definition of that process, related roles and responsibilities must be further clarified and defined.

Quantifying and addressing these and other emerging issues is one of the many challenges that lie ahead and will be addressed in future reports. Other, near-term operational issues are addressed next.

## **The Work Ahead**

The following priorities represent some of the work that must be accomplished this summer and this fall. ( The underlined items are immediate priorities.) Priorities are so designated because they are seen as important next steps toward success, not because they are seen as deficiencies or problem areas. This is not a comprehensive, complete list of tasks, but a list of some of what seems most important.

These priorities are framed in question format to accentuate the collaborative and inquiry-based approach necessary to achieve success in this venture. While certain aspects of this list will change after input from and deliberation with school and district staff, until and unless it is adjusted what follows should serve as a current prioritized list of issues that must be addressed during the remainder of the summer, before school begins, to move the work forward.

### **Student Success at Hope**

How will we...

- ✓ Finalize interim benchmark measures of success for SY 05-06 to assure alignment between POP development and monitoring of the Order?
- ✓ Identify and articulate specific strategies for improving attendance, reducing suspensions, decreasing dropout this coming school year?

### **Four Areas of Compliance with the Order**

#### **Area #1 - Three small and autonomous learning communities:**

How will we...

- ✓ Finalize schedule?
- ✓ Establish a timeline and related benchmarks for moving toward operational autonomy of each SLC?
- ✓ Enhance shared decision-making processes?
- ✓ Review and refine thematic approaches – Arts, IT, Leadership?
- ✓ Clarify and communicate school-based learning goals, aligned with state and district standards, for all Hope students?
- ✓ Monitor and support implementation of the 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grade academy?
- ✓ Increase and improve analysis of “student needs and interests”?

#### **Area #2 - Personalization**

How will we...

- ✓ Plan for the development of a vibrant, effective advisory structure that assigns adult advocates and establishes and maintains strong family connections?
- ✓ Articulate how we will create and refine Individual Learning Plans for all Hope students by mid-October?
- ✓ Create effective Personal Literacy Plans for each student that align with Individual Learning Plans?
- ✓ Pursue plans to recruit numerous “adult advocates” for students at Hope consistent with the Providence Student Success Initiative plans for doing this district wide?

### Area #3 - Professionalism at Hope

How will we:

- ✓ Complete the challenge of staffing Hope with fully qualified educators?
- ✓ Create a comprehensive plan and deliver high quality professional development that coordinates support for staff to address district-wide priorities, challenges related to the Order and other school-based priorities?
- ✓ Support and develop strong leadership through clearly defined supervision and support processes?
- ✓ Identify performance objectives within an effective, fair evaluation system for all staff at Hope rooted in desired outcomes for students and to successful implementation of the Order?
- ✓ Continue to persistently engage Hope staff in decisions that affect their work lives?

### Area #4 - Active Parents/Engaged Community

How will we:

- ✓ Develop a comprehensive plan for community and parent engagement?
- ✓ Engage parents more deeply in school-based decision-making?
- ✓ Make sure community partners are involved deeply in curriculum reform from the outset?
- ✓ Build organizations of parents, students and alumni?
- ✓ Complete the development of clear, written agreements with community partners?
- ✓ Support meaningful youth leadership?

### **Creating A Roadmap for Success**

Another important next step toward success is the continued support of the leadership of the three new administrators and the returning and incoming staff at The Hope High School Complex. These are skilled people, many of whom left positions they enjoyed, agreed to tackle a large somewhat undefined challenge and have achieved much in a short time. Their determination, professionalism, expertise and innovation are critical components to building the infrastructure, culture and momentum toward success. They have already demonstrated their resilience and competence, especially the remaining staff and, most particularly the incoming administrators.

In support of their efforts and to address questions about desired outcomes, priority activities and other operational issues, a clearer work plan that includes timelines and benchmark measures is needed. While there is always the danger of any planning process unintentionally and regrettably replacing the time and effort actually put on implementing change or that it duplicates other planning processes to the point of redundancy, there is a need for a clearer picture of what will happen, when and by whom regarding the Order at The Hope High School Complex. This is especially true when efforts include the diverse, large group of participants identified by the Order.

And while the diverse group of players adds to the complexity of the challenge, their participation provides strength to the endeavor. The participation of the Providence Teachers Union has been an important part of the process. Balancing their obligation to support the rights of their members, while participating in deliberations about what to do at Hope, is a demonstration of effective leadership in a difficult context.

The efforts of the Providence Educational Excellence Coalition (PEEC) and Rhode Island Parent Information Network (RIPIN) to support parent engagement have been very positive. The commitment of a wide and growing array of Hope School Community Partners is the foundation of the innovative approaches to education that the Order outlines. To make the most of these contributions and to develop a clear focus on the work, a clearer guide is needed.

Time should be spent this summer drawing this kind road map in a practical manner, based on realistic and ambitious criteria for success at Hope. The framework introduced in this report will be the organizer for such a plan. That substance coupled with the district's school improvement plan framework will provide a good vehicle for creating a more detailed implementation plan for the Commissioner's Order.

It is the shared responsibility of the Special Master, district leadership and school leadership to develop this kind of road map immediately.

### **Closing**

The work to date at Hope has been inspiring, successful and difficult. The Commissioner's Decision and Order was handed down to the surprise and dismay of some, the delight of others. A "Special Master" was assigned, without complete agreement from district leadership in place at the time, to oversee what are often typical responsibilities of district and school staff. The school lost nearly half of its teachers. All of this occurred during a Superintendent transition that is yet to be concluded. Students and families have been patient, but expectations are enormous, resources scarce, the challenges great. So are the opportunities.

The work has begun, with some initial success. Most of the work, certainly the most difficult part, remains. So, while this report focuses on the measures to define success, a framework to continue monitoring, a positive interim determination of progress and a long list of proposed next steps, the real task is to keep focused on helping students learn what they need to know and be able to do to succeed in life.

Focusing on this end – student success - by supporting the most effective instructional relationship possible between teachers, students, their families, community partners and the subject matter must remain the top priority. It is the promise of this reformation that carries the most hope for Hope.

Any and all actions by the Rhode Island Department of Education, the Providence Public School District, the current and future partners, the staff and leadership at The Hope High School Complex and the Special Master must remain focused on and true to these outcomes.